

THE PROPER NAME FOR THE WHITE-BACKED SKUNK OF
COLOMBIA.

The name *Conepatus mapurito*, based on *Viverra mapurito* Gmelin, 1788, has long been in use for the white-backed skunks of northern South America, and indeed until quite recently was used in a broad sense for all the members of the genus.

It now appears that this name is preoccupied by *Viverra mapurita* Müller, 1776.* The animal described very briefly by Müller† is a species of *Spilogale*, as is evident from the reference to the *Zorille* of Buffon.

In seeking for another name for the South American *Conepatus*, I find that *Viverra semistriata* Boddært, 1785,‡ is strictly available, and even if *V. mapurito* Gmel. were not preoccupied, Boddært's name, being of earlier date and having the same basis, would have to be used.

Both Boddært and Gmelin based their names on a description by Mutis of the skunk occurring at the mines of Pamplona, in the mountains of Colombia.§ I have seen no specimens from that region, and the description of the color pattern given by Mutis|| differs slightly from that of two specimens from Merida, Venezuela, kindly furnished me by Dr. J. A. Allen. The apparent discrepancy may be due either to the ambiguity of the Latin description or to individual variation in the species. It is not probable that more than one species occurs in the vicinity of Pamplona, and this should now be known as *Conepatus semistriatus* (Boddært).—Arthur H. Howell.

THE PROPER NAME FOR THE EASTERN SKUNK.

Dr. D. G. Elliot, in his recently published Check List of Mammals,¶ proposes to replace the name *Mephitis putida* Boitard by *Mephitis olida* Boitard, on the ground that the former is preoccupied by "*Mephitis putida*" Cuvier, 1798. As a matter of fact, Cuvier did not use the combination "*Mephitis putida*," but proposed *Mustela putida* as a substitute for *Viverra putorius* Linn., and so far as I have been able to determine, his name was never adopted by later authors.

I have elsewhere shown** that *Mustela putida* Cuv. does not belong to the genus *Mephitis* as now understood, so that Boitard's *Mephitis putida* is not preoccupied by Cuvier's *Mustela putida* and should stand for the common Eastern skunk.—Arthur H. Howell.

* Natursystems Supplements, p. 32. Sherborn ("Index Animalium," p. 584) quotes this name as "*napurita*," but in the copy in the library of the Department of Agriculture it is spelled with an "m."

† "Er hat einen lockeren haarigen Schwanz, und ist am Körper weiss und schwarz gefleckt."

‡ Elenchus Animalium, p. 84.

§ Abhand. Schwedisch Akad. Wiss., 1770, p. 68.

|| "Color totius corporis nigerrimus est: Corpus supra longitudinaliter maculatum linea albissima, in fronte admodum latiori, ibidem utrinque conneza, deinde retrorsum tenuiori facta, usque ad medium dorsi decurrente. Cauda tota nigerrima est, apice vero albida."

¶ "Check List of Mammals of the No. Amer. Continent," etc., Field Columbian Mus. Zool. Ser. VI, p. 406, 1905.

** Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., XV, pp. 2-5, 1902.